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THE INFLUENCE OF ASTROLOGY ON LIFE AND LITERATURE AT ROME¹

Among the many aberrations of the human mind, two, alchemy and astrology, have exercised profound influence on Western life and thought. To alchemy we owe at least the invention of porcelain, while astrology is responsible for the hypotheses of the universe proposed by Copernicus and Kepler. A perusal of the advertisements in our newspapers and periodicals, as well as a glance at the Classified Telephone Directory, proves that the devotees of astrology are even to-day by no means few in number. Such a force in human affairs deserves better treatment than the neglect which most scholars accord to it. The labors of investigators during the last forty-five years, among whom it may suffice to name Franz Boll, Franz Cumont, and Wilhelm Kroll^{2a}, have served to place in sharp relief the many radiations of the influence of astrology in all spheres of ancient life and literature. Yet our editions of classical authors are strangely silent about this influence, and our students in High School and College hardly ever hear of it, even where the texts clamor for references to it. This paper intends to arouse, if possible, a renewed interest in the subject, although in the brief time at my disposal I can do no more than *summa sequi fastigia rerum*.

Astrology is the product of a marriage of religion and science. It originated in Mesopotamia³, where it held sway for millennia before its first echoes reached Greece. It was in the Academy of Plato, where among the students under the master there was at least one Chaldean, and where another Chaldean enjoyed the hospitality of the aging philosopher⁴, that astrological theories first became well known to the Greeks. Astrology even exerted some influence on the speculations in Plato's dialogues⁵. It is possible, however, that, a century and a half before Plato, Heraclitus the Obscure became acquainted with astrological doctrines⁶. According to Cicero⁷, Plato's friend and pupil Eudoxus was deeply learned in Chaldean astronomy, even though he rejected its claims to authoritative predictions.

But, to proceed to safer ground, we may state it as an established fact that the Greeks acquired a more cer-

tain and more extensive knowledge of the *sideralis scientia* early in the third century before Christ, through the writings of a Babylonian priest and historian, Berossos, who is said to have founded an astrological school on the Island of Cos⁷. The scholars of Alexandria eagerly seized this new revelation, and some one there successfully matched and outdid the claims of the Babylonians by publishing a detailed astrological handbook under the name of an alleged Egyptian king, Nechepso, and an alleged Egyptian priest, Petosiris⁸, a book which acquired such high authority among the adepts that it has been rightly called 'the astrological bible'⁹. Its claim to authority rested chiefly on its pretended revelation from heaven¹⁰. Its assertion of absolute reliability, based on the immutable order of the universe¹¹, appealed most of all to the Stoic philosophers, who eagerly adopted and defended this new science. It is true that Panaetius receded from this standpoint, but, since Posidonius, the greatest of all Stoic scholars, returned to it, astrology became an integral part of Stoic doctrine, as is evidenced by the extended discussion of which Cicero in his *De Divinatione*¹² deemed it worthy. The victorious course of astrology proceeded with incredible swiftness: by the end of the third century B. C. astrology had reached Italy, that is, its advent there almost coincides with the beginning of what we call Latin literature.

It may not be amiss to set the advance of astrology in Italy in its proper *milieu*. From the end of the third century B. C. onward we notice for about seventy-five years a steady influx of Oriental beliefs. The beginning was made in 205, when the Sibylline Books made the final departure of dreaded Hannibal dependent on the bringing to Rome from Pessinus¹³ of the stone fetish of the Magna Mater Idaea. Twenty years later, a secret cult mystery of Dionysus, which had apparently come from Egypt¹⁴, had reached such threatening importance that it had to be suppressed, not without many bloody executions, by a special decree of the Senate, the famous *Senatus Consultum De Bacchanalibus*¹⁵. In 139 B. C., by special edict the praetor Hispanus expelled from Italy *Chaldaeos et Iudaeos*¹⁶, the latter probably as much on account of their Sabazios-Hypsistos religion¹⁷ as for their proselyting activities. It cannot be doubted that among these manifestations of Oriental cults and beliefs the belief in the power of the stars also came to Rome. Whether it came di-

¹This paper was read at the Twenty-sixth Annual Meeting of The Classical Association of the Atlantic States, held at Barnard College, Columbia University, April 28-29, 1933.

^{2a}Franz Boll, *Sphaera* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1903), *Sternlaube und Sterndeutung* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1926); Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* (New York, Putnam's, 1912); Wilhelm Kroll and Franz Skutsch, *Firmicus Maternus Matheseos I* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1897), Vettius Valens (Berlin, Weidmann, 1908).

^{2b}Boll, *Sternlaube*, 1-15, 83-86 (see note 1a, above).

³Index *Herculaneensis*, edited by Siegfried Mekler (1912), 13.III, 36-41; Boll, *Sternlaube*, 91 (see note 1a, above).

⁴Richard Reitzenstein and Hans Heinrich Schäfer, *Studien zum Antiken Syncretismus* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1926).

⁵Boll, *Sternlaube*, 91.

⁶*De Divinatione* 2.87.

⁷Vitruvius 9.6.2. ⁸Boll, *Sternlaube*, 95.

⁹Carl Bezold, in Boll, *Sternlaube*, 24 (see note 1a, above).

¹⁰*Sternlaube*, 97 (see note 1a, above).

¹¹Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 2.56. ¹²1.2, 2.87-99.

¹³Georg Wissowa, *Kultus und Religion der Römer*, 1.317-318 (Munich, Beck, 1912).

¹⁴Richard Reitzenstein, *Hellenistische Mysterienreligionen*, 103-104 (Leipzig, Teubner, 1927).

¹⁵*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 1.106.

¹⁶Grenfell-Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 4.101, 102.

¹⁷Franz Cumont, *Orientalische Religionen im Römischen Heidentum*, 58, note 56 (Leipzig, Teubner, 1931).

rectly or through the intermediary station of Puteoli, the great overseas-market of that time, is not yet clear. An important part in its propagation was no doubt taken by the hordes of slaves that the Syrian Wars introduced into Italy. It is very significant that Cato the Elder¹⁸ feels constrained to forbid his *vilicus* to allow the *familia* to consult the itinerant Chaldeans, the more so because this inhibition lends support to the view that the well-known quotation in Cicero¹⁹ about the *astrologi de circo* is really Ennian, and not more recent. At any rate, it is Ennius who first speaks²⁰ thus of the *astrologi: quod est ante pedes nemo spectat, caeli scrutantur plagas*. But nothing marks the rapid spread of prediction from the stars as impressively as the fact that the word *considero* is used already by Plautus²¹ without any apparent consciousness of its astrological origin. The same poet assigned the prologue of his *Rudens* to the star Arcturus and called him a god²². Plautus makes Arcturus say that by Jupiter's command the stars move among the nations to report to him the names and the deeds of the good and the bad, that they may be rewarded or punished²³. That, so far as I know, neither Plautus nor Terence mentions astrology in his plays cannot be used as a counter argument, since the plays of both writers are based largely on Greek models antedating the spread of the science to Europe.

How and why did this belief in the stars spread among the people after it had once entered Italy? It is the opinion of some prominent scholars²⁴ that the mathematical and the astronomical knowledge required for the drawing of a horoscope, or, as the Latin has it, of a *genitura*, which necessitated naturally a high fee for the astrologer, limited the use of genethliological information to the circles of the nobles and the wealthy. Cumont, indeed, goes so far as to say²⁵ that astrology never penetrated to the masses in the open country. But against this, it seems to me, we must urge that our oldest extant references to astrology mention precisely the lower social strata, that the price of one drachma named in the passage of Ennius²⁶ as an astrologer's fee

is by no means extravagant, and that the quotations refer not only to the city, where the *de circo astrologi* plied their trade, but, if we may believe that Cato framed his prohibition because it was very necessary, to the slaves of the country estates and the farming population. The poet Accius, in his *Praxidicus*, gave farmers' rules based on astrological indications²⁷. Thus it becomes quite clear that the doctrine of the stars, like magic and other foreign superstitions, spread first among the humble and the lowly, as is natural, if we consider the circumstances. From the last decade of the third century through the first third of the second century wars had flooded Italy with Eastern slaves, who carried with them their beliefs and superstitions. In consequence of the close relation of farm laborer and peasant, who lived alongside each other, the impressive doctrines of the former, founded, as they were, on the claim of divine revelation, soon affected their Italic neighbors. Even the nobles still spent much of their time on their farms. Hence it is not difficult to imagine that on occasions of social intercourse, such as Horace paints for us²⁸, the conversation turned also to these new and strange notions. Neither must the influence on their masters of the female slaves and freedwomen, who plied the 'oldest profession', be underestimated, although the evidence for that belongs rather to the Augustan Age²⁹.

It is difficult to say how much the influence of Greek *literati* contributed to the spread of the belief among the higher circles of society. One thinks first, of course, of the famous philosophical embassy of 155 B. C., whose influence is perhaps measured by the insistence of the conservative element on its early dismissal. The extension of Stoicism in Roman society is generally credited to this embassy. More stress might be laid on the fact that Panaetius lived for a considerable time in the home of the Younger Scipio, did we not know that it was precisely this head of the Stoic School who abandoned the defense of divination and astrology. On the other hand, it seems to me not without significance that the historian Polybius was likewise one of the intimates of the Younger Scipio and other members of his circle. Though his sober narrative leaves nowhere any place for the religion of the stars, he constantly emphasizes the importance of Fortune, and the directive rôle which Fortune, or, as I may better say, *Tyche*, plays in the events of human history. It is probable that to Polybius this *Tyche* is far more than mere blind chance³⁰. We may recall in this connection the statement of the greatest modern authority

¹⁸De Agricultura 3.4. ¹⁹De Divinatione 1.132.

²⁰Ennius, Tragic Fragmenta 244 (in J. Vahlen, Ennianae Poesis Reliquiae [Leipzig, Teubner, 1903]). See Vahlen's notes on this verse.

²¹Trinummus 494. <I think it worth while to note that the connection of *considero* with *sidus* is accepted both by Walde-Hofmann (1931) and by Ernout-Meillet (1932), our best authorities on the etymology of Latin words. For review, by Professor E. H. Sturtevant, of these works see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 25.135-136, 26.37. The exact titles of the works are A. Walde, Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch, Dritte Auflage, Von Johannes Baptista Hofmann (six parts have been issued, to *ferre* [Heidelberg, Winter, 1930-1932]), and A. Ernout and A. Meillet, Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Latine, Histoire des Mots (Paris, Klincksieck, 1932).

²²In *Rudens* 5 Arcturus says, *noctu sum in caelo atque inter deos*. ²³*Rudens* 10-21.

²⁴Cumont (as cited in note 17, above), 294, note 15; Ludwig Friedländer, Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte des Roms, 1.210-212 (in tenth edition, by Georg Wissowa [Leipzig, Hirzel, 1922]).

²⁵Friedländer, as cited in note 24, above.

²⁶Compare Ennius, Tragic Fragmenta 319-322 (Vahlen?; see note 20, above; the passage comes from Cicero, De Divinatione 1.132):

superstitiosi vates impudentesque harioli,
aut inertes aut insani aut quibus egestas imperat,
qui sibi semitam non sapiunt, alteri monstrant viam,
quibus divitias pollicentur ab eis drachmam ipsi petunt:
de his divitiis sibi deducant drachmam, reddant cetera.

<Professor A. S. Pease, in his edition of Cicero, De Divinatione (M. Tullii Ciceronis De Divinatione, published in four parts [pages 8-656] in University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, VI, Numbers 2-3, VIII, Numbers 2-3, May, August, 1920, May, August, 1923), has very interesting notes on this passage of Ennius: see pages 336-338. On page 337, column 2, he characterizes the fee

here (*drachma*) as small; he sees a contrast between "the smallness of the fee and the greatness of the <promised> service. . . ." If this view is correct, and I think it is, the *vates* and the *harioli* here are very sorry specimens of their respective classes. It seems plain to me that Ennius is scornfully describing the very lowest classes of the soothsayers. What he says here of those classes can have no bearing, I think, on the fees demanded and received by reputable and distinguished practitioners of astrology, i. e. on *normal* astrological practices or fees. C. K. >

²⁷Pliny, N. H. 18.200; Boll, Sternglaube, 103 (see note 1a, above).

²⁸Sermones 2.2.112-116. Note particularly the last verse, *saevis atque novis inoveat Fortuna tumultus*. Compare also Sermones 2.6.61-78, especially 73-76; Vergil, Aeneid 1.742-746.

²⁹The numerous references in the elegiac poets I hope soon to discuss in a separate article.

³⁰Eugen Taubler, *Tyche*, 89 (Leipzig, Teubner, 1926); Wilhelm Roscher, Ausführliches Lexikon der Mythologie der Griechen und Römer, 5.1322-1323.

on ancient astrology³⁰, that the path of development in the Hellenistic religion leads from *Tyche* to *Heimarmene*, and thence to magic and the religions of salvation.

We know too little of society and literature between 150 and 80 B. C. to attempt to trace the development of astrological faith in this period. Only the decree of Hispalus (139 B. C.), which I mentioned above, stands out in bold relief. But its terms, as we know them, are too general and too indefinite to enable us to say more than that the Roman rulers saw in the *Chaldaei* a real danger to the policies and the morals of the State. However, when the first century begins, the picture becomes more detailed. Sulla was a firm believer in the predictions of the astrologers³¹. When the Marians marched on Rome in 87 B. C., most of the Roman nobles left in hurried flight, but the consul Cn. Octavius, relying on Chaldean predictions, stayed behind and was slain: on his body, Plutarch tells us³², there were found *Χαλδαϊκὰ διαγράμματα*.

The spread of this belief received powerful stimulation through the attitude toward astrology of the greatest of the later Stoics, Posidonius, from Apameia in Syria. He taught at Rhodes, where besides others he had Cicero, Caesar, and Pompey among his hearers. Not only did he reverse the position of his predecessor Panaetius, but he gave to astrology what it had lacked so far, a philosophical foundation, by establishing the principle of the *συντάξις τῶν ὅλων*, the universal bond which connects all parts of the universe, the highest and the lowest, the greatest and the smallest³³. It is one of the instances of historical irony that he, a man of truly scientific instinct, should by this principle have laid the base for that crass superstition which applied in the so-called Iatromathematica the theories of macrocosm and microcosm to the ills of the human body.

This generation (80 to 45 B. C.) lent a most willing ear to the suggestions of the interpreters of the stars. According to Cicero³⁴, the *Chaldaei* told Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar repeatedly that they would die at home, in old age, at the height of their fortunes. A friend of Cicero, Nigidius Figulus, who was devoted to all sorts of obscure and occult beliefs and practices³⁵, is said to have prophesied to Octavianus's father the future greatness of his son, after ascertaining the hour of his birth³⁶. There is some probability that through him the Petosiris Book was first made known to the Romans³⁷. During the same years, another Roman of good family, Tarutius Firmanus, even cast the horoscope of the eternal city as well as that of Romulus³⁸.

(the latter he found identical with that of Octavianus³⁹). Cicero himself, although in his work on divination he cannot say enough in contradiction of the claims of astrology, had employed astrological ideas in a discussion in the *De Re Publica*⁴⁰. How seriously we must take this interest at this time of the educated circles of Rome in astrology is proved most strongly by the fact that Varro devoted the whole ninth book of his *Disciplinae* to the exposition of the doctrines of astrology. Nor was the interest purely theoretical. Caesar placed the bull on the standards of his legions, because that animal is the zodiacal sign Taurus, the *domus* or *oikos* of the planet Venus, which he must have identified with his reputed ancestress, Venus Genetrix⁴¹. His grandnephew Augustus was said to have been marked on breast and abdomen with birthmarks that formed the constellation of the Ursa Caelestis⁴². Since this is the constellation which in the belief of magic and astrology turns the pole and thereby the world, this notice was no doubt meant to reinforce the faith of the people in his predestination as the monarch of the Roman world. He himself was a firm believer in the science of the stars, so much so that, during his sojourn in Apollonia, before he went to Italy, together with his friend Agrippa he consulted the astrologer Theagenes⁴³, who foretold him his future greatness. According to Suetonius, so much did Augustus rely on his *fatum* that he published his horoscope (*θῆμα*) and minted a silver coin with the picture of the Capricorn, his natal zodiacal sign. This, too, was done with an eye to the Emperor's preordained claim to rule, for, as Horace says⁴⁴, this part of the zodiac is the *tyrannus Hesperiae undae*.

If the claims of astrology were thus officially recognized and fostered, we cannot wonder that the writings of the Augustan poets are filled with allusions to this form of divination. Vergil's fourth eclogue is fundamentally based on it, for the theory of the ten *saecula* belongs to the astrologers⁴⁵. Vergil was acquainted also with the *thema mundi*, the position of zodiacal signs and the planets on the day of its origin, on which the duration of the world depends, for, when constellations and planets are once again, after many years, in their original positions, the cataclysm or the ecpyrosis puts an end to the world, which is then renewed. Vergil speaks of this horoscope of the world, in *Georgics* 2.336-342⁴⁶. Similarly the invocation of Lucina in *Eclogues* 4.10 is founded on astrological considerations, as Franz Boll has seen⁴⁷; one of the constellations rising next to Capricorn, the sign of the winter

³⁰Boll, *Sternnglaube*, 22 (see note 1a, above).

³¹Plutarch, Sulla 37. It is possible that the Greek translation (*Ἐραφρόδιτος*) of his surname *Felix* was influenced by astrological considerations.

³²Plutarch, Marius 42. According to Pliny, N. H. 35.199 it was in this time that Manilius Antiochus, *conditor astrologiae*, lived.

³³Cumont (as cited in note 17, above), 296, note 41.

³⁴*De Divinatione* 2.99.

³⁵Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 2.1817 (in the article *Astrologie*, by Ernst Riess).

³⁶Suetonius, Augustus 94. Lucan (1.638) makes him cast the horoscope of the Civil War; the passage has been discussed by Boll, *Sphaera*, 203 (see note 1a, above).

³⁷Ernst Riess, *Nechepsonis Fragmenta Magica*, 22-23 (a dissertation, published at Bonn, 1890). See also note 8, above.

³⁸Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.98.

³⁹Plutarch, Romulus 12.

⁴⁰Cicero, *De Re Publica* 6.17.

⁴¹Alfred von Domaszewski, *Archaeologisch-Epigraphische Mitteilungen*, 15.182.

⁴²Suetonius, Augustus 80.

⁴³Suetonius, Augustus 94.12. <For some very interesting remarks on Agrippa's relation to the astrologers see Marcus Agrippa, A Biography, by Meyer Reinhold, 4, 51, 163 (this is a Columbia University dissertation, published by The W. P. Humphrey Press, Geneva, New York, 1933. Pp. ix + 203). On page 4, note 13, Dr. Reinhold combats the view urged by some scholars that Sagittarius was the natal sign of Agrippa. In the same note, toward the close, he notes that the characteristics given by Manilius under Capricorn (4.568-570, 791-796) do not suit Augustus at all.

⁴⁴Horace, *Carmina* 2.17.19.

⁴⁵Eduard Norden, *Die Geburt des Kindes*, 15, note 2 (Leipzig, Teubner, 1924).

⁴⁶*Ibidem*, 16, note 3, 17, note 1. Norden calls attention also to Vergil, *Aeneid* 11.259 *Iris Minervae sidus*, the constellation Aries.

⁴⁷Franz Boll, *Sphaera*, 211 (see note 1a, above).

solstice, is Eileithyia-Lucina, cradling a babe in her arms. But Vergil's knowledge of astrology went still deeper. He knew somehow of the fact that, originally in Babylonia, and, in accord with this theory, in the view of some Greek astrologers and astronomers⁴⁸, there were only eleven signs in the zodiac, and thus he transfers his deified Emperor to the sphere of the fixed stars, by making the Scorpion contract his claws (Chelae) to create room for the *novum sidus*. Therein he apparently compliments Augustus on his justice, since the twelfth sign commonly assigned to this place is that of Libra, the Scales of Justice⁴⁹. It is particularly interesting to notice the religious color of the passage, since there is no sense in placing Augustus among the zodiacal signs unless these, too, are divine (we find them distinctly called divine by later astrologers⁵⁰).

While it is easy to credit Vergil, who was deeply under Stoic influence, with a real faith in the predictions and the teachings of the star-gazers, this assumption is not so easy in the case of his friend Horace, whose poems nevertheless contain frequent allusions to astrology. These, however, are not all of the same value. That Leuconoe⁵¹ is a devotee of the *numeri Babylonii* is merely one of the common indications about the superstitions to which the women of her class were inclined; here belong also the reference to Barine⁵² and to Lydia's fear⁵³ that the *fata* may not permit Calais to survive her. In the same manner, it is not surprising that an Asiatic provincial should have called Brutus the sun and his companions *stellae salubres*⁵⁴. But that the poet may tell Numicius⁵⁵ that there are persons—evidently not many—who can look upon sun and stars without fear, and that Icius⁵⁶ is said to study the celestial phenomena are facts that prove how wide-spread the faith was among the men of the higher classes. That Horace's patron Maecenas was much tormented by the fear of astrological predictions and that the poet tried to console him⁵⁷ is too well known to every reader of the Odes to need more than passing mention. But, when Horace in the same poem speaks also of his own horoscope, we ask ourselves in surprise whether the *Epicuri de grege porcus* could truly have believed in astrology or whether he only assumes this belief in deference to his powerful friend. Yet we are reluctantly compelled to believe in the honesty of Horace's faith in astrology. The man who could say to his patron that he would forego all the benefits of their friendship rather than give up his freedom of action can hardly be assumed to have played a part in which he did not believe. I will not stress the fact that he also mentions the *Iulium sidus*⁵⁸, because therein he merely follows common tradition, but, when, a few verses later, he tells Jupiter that *tibi cura magni Caesaris fatis data*, a comparison with the *tutela Iovis* of the Maecenas poem and the use of the word *fatis*, prove, it seems to me, that Horace is here thinking not so much of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus as of the planetary god. Astrological

faith had made the youthful poet of the Epodes⁵⁹ describe the Blessed Isles as a place beyond the influence of the stars, and the aging writer of the letter to Florus explains the difference in the characters of men and in their occupations by the aid of the Genius, *natale comes qui temperat astrum*⁶⁰, probably the *'Αγαθός Δαίμων'* of the astrologers, just as our extant handbooks make much of the influence of the stars on character⁶¹.

I have mentioned the fact that there are many allusions to astrology in the elegiac poets of the Augustan Age. It is unnecessary to dwell on them in detail, because, as I have said, they refer mostly to members of the demimonde of the time, in whom we expect such an attitude. The importance of these passages lies rather in the fact that they reveal to us one of the most powerful agencies in the furthering of the astrological faith. Only one of them, I think, may be worth discussing here, the farewell elegy to Messalla by Tibullus⁶², in which the poet says that he used *Saturni dies* as a pretence for not starting on the journey. While he undoubtedly means by these words that he made use of the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, as others, too, did then⁶³, the fact that he calls it the 'Day of Saturnus' is an indication, one of the earliest in Latin literature, that our week of seven days, each of them under the rule of one of the planets, was then well enough known to Roman society to be thus referred to without a word of explanation⁶⁴. We shall see how quickly this astrological reckoning spread and how influential it became.

Even before Octavianus had established himself as monarch, Agrippa, in spite of what we have heard about his own belief⁶⁵, found it necessary to expel the astrologers from Rome in 33 B. C. The circumstance that the monarchs themselves, one after the other, were devotees of the astral science did not protect its practitioners from banishment. Two years after Tiberius succeeded Augustus such expulsion was decreed again, and Claudius as well as Vespasian resorted to the same measure⁶⁶. Yet Tiberius not only consulted astrologers—the story of his testing Thrasyllus in Rhodes has become famous⁶⁷—, but he was himself an adept in the art, to such an extent that Suetonius ascribed to this fact his neglect of the gods and their ritual⁶⁸.

That the favor with which Tiberius looked on astrology was widely known is best shown by the *Astrologica* of Manilius, which is probably dedicated to him (if not to Augustus himself⁶⁹). This work, unfortunately not so widely studied as it deserves, was intended to be a counterfoil to the materialistic *De Re-*

⁴⁸Epodes 16.61 nullius astra gregem aestuosa torret impotentia.

⁴⁹Epistulae 2.2.187.

⁵⁰See e.g. Vettius Valens, *Anthologiae* 4.19.

⁵¹Tibullus 1.3.18.

⁵²Horace, *Sermones* 1.9.69.

⁵³Franz Boll, in an article entitled *Hebdomas*, in Pauly-Wissowa, 7.2556, 2557, 2560, 2573.

⁵⁴See the text in connection with note 43, above.

⁵⁵For various expulsions see Dio Cassius 49.43 (33 B. C.); Tacitus, *Annales* 2.32 (16 A. D.); Tacitus, *Annales* 12.52 (52 A. D.); Tacitus, *Historiae* 2.62 (69 A. D.).

⁵⁶Tacitus, *Annales* 6.20–21. ⁵⁷Suetonius, *Tiberius* 60.

⁵⁸Manilius 1.7. On account of Manilius's words *pater patriae*, a title which Tiberius refused to accept, it has been thought by some that Manilius must refer here to Augustus. See also Pauly-Wissowa, 14.1116 (in the article *Manilius*, by Jacob van Wageningen).

⁴⁸Boll, *Sternlaube*, 7 (see note 1a, above).

⁴⁹Vergil, *Georgics* 1.32–35.

⁵⁰Cumont (as cited in note 17, above), 160.

⁵¹Horace, *Carmina* 1.11.2. ⁵²Horace, *Carmina* 2.8.10.

⁵³Horace, *Carmina* 3.9.16. ⁵⁴Sermones 1.7.24–25.

⁵⁵Epistulae 1.6.3. ⁵⁶Epistulae 1.12.16–19.

⁵⁷Carmina 2.17.17–24. ⁵⁸Carmina 1.12.46, 50.

rum Natura of Lucretius, and is, indeed, in many parts a worthy rival of that poem. Each author is sincerely and honestly convinced of the truth of his message, and of its power to make men free and happy. As Lucretius is an Epicurean, so Manilius is a thorough-going Stoic⁶⁹, to whom astrology is a possible science because man is related to the star gods, the *conscia fati sidera*⁷⁰. Manilius feels—it is this feature which endears him to us, no matter what we think of his astrological doctrines—that he is preaching a divine gospel of the unchangeable divine spirit⁷¹, who has revealed himself to his earthly image (*quis caelum possit nisi caeli munere nosse et reperire deum nisi pars ipse deorum est?*, says Manilius⁷²), and to whom he owes his ability to understand the laws of destiny⁷³. Of course, Manilius is a firm believer in predestination: *fata regunt orbem, certa stant omnia lege, et nascentes morimur finisque ab origine pendet*, he says⁷⁴. He protests with great earnestness against the objection that such predestination removes all personal responsibility⁷⁵, and concludes that *nec refert scelus unde cadit: scelus esse fatendum est*. In one respect, he presents a peculiar riddle, for, in contrast to all other astrologers of whom we know, he has no word about the power of the planets and thereby has made it impossible to put his book to practical use in making predictions. Whether this is due to the fact that, as it seems, his work is unfinished—in 1.15 he speaks of the *adversos stellarum cursus*, but as part of astronomical, not of astrological doctrine—or, whether we are dealing with an individual view of the power of the constellations has not as yet been decided.

The century between Manilius and Juvenal saw an enormous growth in every stratum of Roman society of the faith in astrology. Of its strength in the highest circles we can form a tragic conception from the many passages in which Suetonius remarks on the beliefs of the Emperors and their courtiers⁷⁶. They are all tarred with the same brush, even if now and then they vent their anger on the practitioners of astrology for fomenting by their predictions vain ambitions in the minds of possible pretenders to the throne. There was no surer and faster avenue to execution than to be denounced for having consulted a star-gazer. Yet this very danger enhanced the reputation of the star-gazers. No one's advice is more eagerly sought, Juvenal tells us⁷⁷; he tells us further⁷⁸, *nemo mathematicus genium indemnatus habebit*. . . . For the spread of the belief among the lowest classes there is probably no better witness than Petronius, whose Trimalchio not only had at the door of his dining-room a table of the courses of the moon and the seven planets⁷⁹, but seems to have

dabbled himself in the science⁸⁰. A Chaldean had predicted to him the years, months, and days of life which still remained to him⁸¹. That this is no mere figment of the satirist is proved by inscriptions which, evidently put up by believers, give the life of the deceased not merely in years and in months, but also by days and by hours⁸². Nor were persons like this Oriental freedman Trimalchio the only ones who delved into the science of the stars. The woman-hater Juvenal⁸³ warns his reader specifically to avoid the society of women who have constantly the Ephemerides in their hands, that is who have planetary calendars of the weekdays, and who know so much about astrology that they are themselves consulted with respect to it and who take no step without looking up its possible effects, using in this effort the books of Thrasyllus, probably the court astrologer of Tiberius, or the book of Petosiris (6.581)⁸⁴. The mention of the latter is the more interesting as we have cause to believe that in Juvenal's time this book of the Egyptian sages⁸⁵ was no longer in complete form in the hands of even the professionals, so that the name seems merely to have been typical for any book of astrological predictions. How many of these men plied their trade in the Rome of this time we have no means of telling; but their number must have been large. For Umbricius it was a handicap in making his living in Rome that he was ignorant of the motions of the stars⁸⁶. Sometimes it appears as if the satirist himself had put faith in the *ratio sideralis*⁸⁷, but that hardly admits of convincing proof. Even scientists were not exempt from the power of this belief. When Pliny the Elder discusses the possible length of human life, he says that the topic seems of itself to demand the aid of the *sideralis scientia* and proceeds to quote by name the professors of that *scientia* and their statements⁸⁸.

So deep a thinker as Tacitus found it worth while to write of the influence of astrology on the Emperors whose characters he searched so deeply⁸⁹. He speaks⁹⁰ of the practitioners of astrology as a race which *in nostra civitate et vetabitur semper et retinebitur*, and in a memorable passage⁹¹ he leaves us finally in doubt

⁶⁹Petronius 39. See Jacques de Vreese, *Petron 39 and die Astrologie* (Amsterdam, 1927). <For a review, by Professor R. G. Kent, of this monograph see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 21.119. C. K.>

⁷⁰Petronius 76-77.

⁷¹Friedländer (as cited in note 24, above), 1.316. <I asked Professor Riess whether the two matters he mentions here should really be grouped together. I urged that astrologers predicted—or pretended to predict—, whereas the figures given on a tombstone record facts—or profess to record facts. He stood his ground, writing me as follows: "The point of my argument is that nobody would be interested in placing on a tombstone the exact age of the deceased, even to stating the days and the hours, unless he were convinced that a considerable importance attached to this accuracy. I agree with Friedländer's view that these records on tombstones can be explained only by the assumption that these people believed in the mathematical accuracy of the horoscope". Though I am an utter layman in matters astrological, I cannot refrain from saying that I cannot here follow Friedländer and Professor Riess. It is, of course, true that the persons who made such exact records on tombstones attached importance to them, but I fail to see in the records *per se* proof of belief in astrology. I have known folks—humble and otherwise—who, though they had no knowledge whatever of astrology, attached importance to such matters. C. K.>

⁷²Juvenal 6.572-581. ⁷³See note 37, above.

⁷⁴Juvenal 3.42-43.

⁷⁵Juvenal 7.194-201, 9.32-36, 13.103, 14.248-250, 16.3-4. Peculiar is 10.313-314, where the Homeric story of the love adventure between Mars and Venus is ascribed to the *astrum Martis*, as if even the god had his own fatal star.

⁷⁶160-162.

⁷⁷Tacitus, *Historiae* 1.22, 1.32, *Annales* 6.20-21, 16.14.

⁷⁸Tacitus, *Historiae* 1.22. ⁷⁹Tacitus, *Annales* 6.22.

⁶⁹Manilius 2.61, and particularly 4.886-910. In 4.893 we read *quid mirum noscere mundum si possunt homines, quibus est et mundus in ipsis?*

⁷⁰1.1. Compare 4.906 *victorque ad sidera mittit sidereos oculos*.

⁷¹1.524 *deus est qui non mutatur in aevo*.

⁷²2.115-116.

⁷³2.149 *Hoc quoque fatorum est legem perdiscere fati*.

⁷⁴4.14, 16. ⁷⁵4.106-117.

⁷⁶Suetonius, *Augustus* 5, 12, 98.4; *Tiberius* 14, 36, 62, 67, 69; *Caligula* 19, 45, 57; *Nero* 6, 36, 40, 49; *Galba* 4; *Otho* 5, 6; *Vitellius* 3, 14; *Vespasian* 14, 25; *Titus* 9; *Domitianus* 10, 14, 15, 16.

⁷⁷6.557-564. ⁷⁸6.562.

⁷⁹Petronius 30. This is the second oldest Roman mention of the week.

whether he did or did not himself take stock in the truth of their predictions.

It is possible to prolong almost indefinitely this survey of the utterances of Latin literature about astrology, but that would be merely repetitious. How far the influence of astrology made itself felt is shown in the establishment, by the Emperor Alexander Severus³⁹, of official professorships for its teaching. In the same century we find Censorinus devoting a considerable portion of his congratulatory birthday pamphlet to an exposition of astrological doctrine⁴⁰. Nor did the victory of Christianity put an end to this influence. About 345 Firmicus Maternus wrote with insufficient knowledge, but with tiring verbosity, his eight books *Matheseos*, the last great work on astrology. Ten years later he had become one of the greatest zealots for the new religion; he wrote *De Errore Profanarum Religionum* in order to stir up the fanatical persecution of the pagans. But it is difficult to believe that his conversion put a stop also to his reliance on the stars. Others, at any rate, succeeded in harmonizing and combining Christianity with their astrological convictions. In an excellent chapter Boll⁴¹ has traced the history of the faith in the stars until the age of the illumination placed the stamp of ridicule on it. Yet even this rationalism has not been able to eradicate completely the power of the queen of sciences. Our almanacs, our language, even our business life still show its stamp, and it almost appears as if it were due for a new revival even in scientific research⁴².

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ERNST RIESS

MORE FLOATING ISLANDS

In connection with the topic of floating islands, which Professor Shero has introduced in his interesting article, *The Vadimonian Lake and Floating Islands of Equatorial Africa* (*THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 27.51-52), one is reminded of the primeval fluctuation of Apollo's Delos, alluded to by Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.75-77:

quam pius Arquitenens oras et litora circum
errantem Myconoe celsa Gyaroque revinxit,
immutamque coli dedit et contemnere ventos.

Ovid also, among others¹, mentions the instability of Delos before the wandering Leto found sanctuary there (*Metamorphoses* 6.332-334):

illa suam vocat hanc, cui quondam regia coniunx
orbem interdixit, quam vix erratica Delos
orantem accepit tum cum levis insula nabat.

There is, moreover, the monstrous island described by Lucian of Samosata in his *Vera Historia* 2.42-43 (I use here the translation of Professor A. M. Harmon)²:

... We had not yet gone five hundred furlongs when we saw a very large, thick forest of pines and cypresses. We

thought it was land, but in reality it was a bottomless sea overgrown with rootless trees, in spite of which the trees stood up motionless and straight, as if they were floating. On drawing near and forming an idea of the situation, we were in a quandary what to do, for it was not possible to sail between the trees, they being thick and close together, nor did it seem easy to turn back. Climbing the tallest tree, I looked to see how things were on the other side, and I saw that the forest extended for fifty stades or a little more, and that another ocean lay beyond. So we resolved to lift the ship on to the tree-tops, which were thick, and cross over, if we could, to the farther side; and that is what we did. We made her fast to a large rope, climbed the trees and pulled her up with much ado. Setting her on the branches and spreading our canvas, we sailed just as if we were at sea, carried along by the force of the wind...

We managed the wood in spite of everything and reached the water. Lowering the ship again in the same way we sailed through pure, clear water...

In a brief note on this passage, explanatory of ἀβυσσὸν ἀρρίστου δένδρου καταπεφυτευμένον... ("bottomless sea overgrown with rootless trees"), Professor F. G. Allinson remarks³, "like the seaweed in the Sargasso Sea, cf. Janvier's romance". In the words "Janvier's romance" he is referring to a book entitled *In the Sargasso Sea*, written by Thomas Allibone Janvier (1849-1913) and published in 1898. Of the Sargasso Sea the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*⁴ (19.998 B) has this to say:

... a tract of the North Atlantic ocean covered with floating seaweed (*Sargassum*, originally named *sargaço* by the Portuguese)... The weed, known as Gulf Weed (*Sargassum Bacciferum*), belongs to the brown algae (*q. v.*), and is easily recognized by small berry-like bladders. The floating masses are believed to be replenished by additional supplies torn from the coasts to the south-west and carried by currents to the great whirl of the Sargasso Sea. The weed supports a considerable amount of somewhat low forms of animal life of a type always more characteristic of the littoral zone than of the open ocean. The Sargasso Sea was first reported by Columbus, who on his initial "West Indies" voyage was involved in it for several days. The widely credited story of ships becoming embedded in the weed beyond possibility of escape was disproved by the "Michael Sars" expedition (1910).

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REVIEW

The World of the Ancients. By A. E. Douglas-Smith. New York: Robert M. McBride and Company (<1931>)¹. Pp. 296².

In a sturdy little book, *The World of the Ancients*, Mr. Douglas-Smith, Resident Tutor for Wiltshire in the University of Bristol, essays the rôle of an H. G. Wells for juvenile readers; he states (5) that it is

¹Francis G. Allinson, *Lucian, Selected Writings*, 83 (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1905).

²There is no date on the title page, but the note on page 20 furnishes a precise *terminus post quem*: "Knowledge of Pluto <the planet> is still—in February 1931—of a very hypothetical nature..."

³The contents of the book are as follows: Preface (5-6); <Table of> Contents (7-9); <List of> Maps and Diagrams (11); Chapter I, *The World Before Man* (13-45); Chapter II, *The Coming of Man* (46-74); Chapter III, *Egypt* (75-100); Chapter IV, *Babylonia and Assyria* (101-137); Chapter V, *Neolithic Europe—Crete and the Aegean* (138-154); Chapter VI, *China and India* (155-168); Chapter VII, *Greece and Persia* (169-201); Chapter VIII, *Alexander the Great* (202-227); Chapter IX, *Rome and Carthage* (228-254); Chapter X, *Julius Caesar and Jesus Christ* (255-279); Time-Charts (281-287); Works Consulted (280-290); Index (291-296).

³⁹Priedländer (as cited in note 24, above), 1.212.

⁴⁰Censorinus, *De Die Natali* 7, 8, 17, 14, 19, 23, Fragment 3.

⁴¹Boll, *Sternglaube*, Chapter III (see note 1a, above).

⁴²Reports in newspapers in April, 1933, told that certain scientists had found a connection between business booms and depressions and the cycles of the sun and the moon; new words (*solaristic, lunaristic*) were even coined for this alleged phenomenon.

¹Compare Strabo 10.5.2 (page 485), who quotes some lines of Pindar; Callimachus, *Hymn to Delos*, especially 191-196; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 4.66.

²A. M. Harmon, *Lucian, With an English Translation*, in *The Loeb Classical Library*, 1.347, 349 (London, William Heinemann, New York, Putnam's, 1913).

his "primary aim . . . to present world history as an interesting subject to junior boys. . ." Beginning with a quotation from *The Time Machine*, he hurtles backward through the ages some thousand million years or so to the dim dawn of the Pampalaeozoic Era of "first life" (18); thence he retraces his course a bit more observingly until he comes to a final halt at the time of the death of Jesus Christ in 29 A. D. (279).

This is, after all, something of a journey and a tax on human endurance, and before the goal is reached Mr. Douglas-Smith reveals that the pressure of age has begun to tell. In the early stages, while the world is still young and the time traveler still youthful, the excursion is quite fascinating. The sections on the world's formation, the origin of life, and the struggle upward of prehistoric man are well written and quite informative; for their clarity and vividness they are distinctive. The next two chapters, on Egypt and the Near East, are also very worthy, and, despite their conciseness, succeed admirably in breathing fresh life into such figures as Thothmes III, Aknaton, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar. But at this juncture (137), having consumed nearly half of his allotted time and with the packed vistas of Greece and Rome still before him, our speeding author realizes that he must be getting on apace. Greece and Rome are, after all, important in his itinerary. On the other hand, he recalls that in his Preface (5) he has promised his boys a treat "as much as possible in narrative style. . ." and also (5) that, since "battles always interest boys. . .", battles they shall have—though not without a pacifistic text as antidote. What is one to do? One must fly hurriedly over all, or one must omit much. Omission seems to be the better course. So, after a tantalizing glimpse at Crete and the Aegean and a breathless interlude devoted to China and India, our intrepid traveler dashes blithely, but with increasing signs of exhaustion, from one Greek and Roman scene to another until he finally achieves 29 A. D. just one page short of the close of his book. To his boys he has allowed glances at Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, Plataea, the Granicus, Issus, Tyre, Arbela, Mylae, Trasimenus, and Alesia, but they have had no time at all to make the acquaintance of Peistratus, Cleisthenes (Solon made them a curt bow in passing), Servius Tullius, The Twelve Tables, Camillus, Philip V, Aemilius Paulus, Scipio Aemilianus, Catiline, etc. To change the figure, we may say that they have been allowed to view a number of the side shows, but have been rushed past whole sectors of the main pavilion. To these they will have to return later, under the conduct of another and less impetuous guide.

This may be pardonable, but, unfortunately, their present guide has, in his haste, given the boys some misinformation in this later stage of his tour. He twice speaks of the satyr play as a "comedy" (193, 194). He confuses the metopes of the Parthenon with the frieze on the walls of the *cella* (196). He seems to believe (256) that Marius was elected to his first consulship in 107 B. C. after he "had conquered Jugurtha. . .", though it was actually a year later that Jugurtha was treacherously surrendered. On page 257 Pompey is

said to have returned to Rome from the East in 62 B. C., while two pages later mention is made of his coming back to the city in 59; the actual date of his re-appearance in Rome seems to have been 61. Caesar is described as having been "publicly worshipped as Divus Julius, 'the divine Julius' . . .", apparently by the Romans, before his death (268). When the Second Triumvirate divided the Roman world among themselves, Antony, we are told, took Africa as his portion and Lepidus Asia (270-271); this statement would be nearer the truth as we know it if the names were reversed. Our author leads us to believe that both Catullus and Lucretius lived in the Augustan Age of Latin literature, and he even adds (272) that Maecenas "was the friend and patron of the poets Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Tibullus, and Catullus. . .". Finally, the characterization (274) of Herod <Antipas> as "the Roman tetrarch, or sub-governor of Galilee. . ." is, as it stands, likely to mislead, if it does not fall short of the truth.

But it would be unjust to leave the reader of this review with the impression that Mr. Douglas-Smith's book is wholly deficient. Besides the excellent sections in the first part and some passages of lively narration in the later portions, there are useful maps and battle-plans, a wealth of attractive illustrations, new as well as old, and, perhaps best of all, numerous valuable time-charts and summarizing tables, such as those of the Cainozoic Era (47), the different types of sub-men and early men (56), the various races of men ethnologically considered (67), the six important linguistic groups (74), and the five chronological charts near the end of the volume (281-287). There is a good Index.

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THE TIBER AND THE CAMPAGNA

IN THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 27:55-56, under the caption *The Tiber*, I had something to say about a book entitled *Down the Tiber and Up to Rome*. In Chapter XIII (185-201) the authors describe their arrival, in their rubber canoe, at Rome. On pages 185-195 one finds interesting reflections on the Campagna, reflections inspired by the fact that, to reach Rome from north or from south, one must go through the Campagna. I quote from pages 185-188:

Just about Castelnuovo di Porto you emerge so gradually into the Campagna that you are scarcely aware of any marked change in the face of the land. Indeed, from the river, the change is less noticeable than it would be from the road because in a canoe you are so much lower than the top of the banks that your near field of vision is blotted out and you can see only the more distant objects unless you go ashore for a survey.

The Campagna, in the minds of most people, is an ill-defined area. Ninety-nine out of an hundred would be hard put to it to say just where the Campagna begins and where it ends. Furthermore, a great many people have a general impression that the Campagna is a flat plain. As a matter of actual fact, it is anything but flat. While there are certain comparatively flat areas within its limits, the greater part of the surface of the Campagna is undulating, with a succession of long

swelling elevations and depressions like the troughs and crests of the sea after a storm.

Properly speaking, the Campagna is that great undulating plain surrounding Rome, approximately forty miles long by thirty miles wide. It is bounded to the north and northeast by the old Ciminian belt of craters around Viterbo and by the Sabine hills to the east of the Tiber; to the east it is shut in by the Sabine hills and the fore-Appennines; to the south it is enclosed by the Alban hills; and on the west it is terminated by the coast.

The general impression conveyed by the Campagna to-day <1929> is one of utter desolation and barrenness. Approaching by road, as you descend the last hills from the north, you feel that the Eternal City is sitting in the midst of a grey-brown desert. There is little evidence of either human habitation or cultivation—nothing but an austere waste, extending from the city to the distant hills, the monotony relieved only by an half-ruinous farmstead here, a few arches of broken aqueduct there, or a couple of lonely stone pines. The entrance from this quarter is undeniably disappointing, and tolerable only in the late afternoon when the lengthening shadows and mellow light soften the air of stark dreariness.

If you enter Rome by rail, the approach is no less depressing, especially if you come from the direction of Civita Vecchia. After such an entrance through the grim, furrowed, sun-baked and dust-covered Cam-

pagna, it takes a stranger about three days to recover from the sense of disappointment before he can begin to feel and appreciate the charm of Rome. Nor will he get much relief if, during those first few days of shattered ideals, he makes an expedition by steam tram to Hadrian's Villa and Tivoli. After passing the Basilica of San Lorenzo, the whole way thither seems an unmitigated stretch of weary, sun-bleached desolation. Even in the freshness of winter or early spring, there is little to allay the utter tedium and monotony.

Of all the possible ways of coming into Rome, approach by the Tiber would least shock the expectations of anyone who had never been there before. From the river you see less of the negative environment and your eyes rest chiefly on the lines of the blue hills all round the horizon. Then, too, there is the refreshing greenery of the banks and of the trees growing here and there along the course of the stream. As you come near the city you see ahead of you the wooded slopes of Monte Mario with the Villa Madama standing boldly out from its green background, to the left the rounded tree-clad eminence of Monte Parioli, and before long you glide under the time-mellowed arches of the Ponte Milvio. After that, you soon find yourself passing between the high stone-faced and parapeted embankments that line both sides of the Tiber on its way through the city. Then comes the landing at the steps of the Ponte Margherita. You are in Rome without being hurt by the ancient scars of the surrounding country.

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